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LETTER DATED 26 NOVEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic, as received by fax, issued on 24 November 1996 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Eldar KOULIEV
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: Russian]

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE AZERBAIJANI REPUBLIC

On 24 November 1996, illegal so-called "presidential elections" were organized by the Republic of Armenia in the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic, which it occupies.

In this connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic considers it necessary to make the following statement:

The attempts to hold illegal "elections" constitute a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the Azerbaijani Republic, its Constitution and laws, and a glaring breach of the Charter of the United Nations, the imperative principles of international law and the principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and are aimed at the annexation of part of the territory of Azerbaijan, seized as a result of aggression by the Republic of Armenia against the Azerbaijani Republic.

The responsibility for the consequences of this infringement of international law lies squarely with the Republic of Armenia, which incited this unlawful act.

The actions of those who initiated these illegal "elections" have met with immediate and unanimous censure on the part of the international community. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the United States of America, Turkey, the Russian Federation, France, the Islamic Republic of Iran and a number of other countries have already made statements denouncing the illegal "elections".

Condemnation of the holding of illegal "elections" in the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic, occupied by the Republic of Armenia, has been expressed by such an authoritative international organization as the European Union in a statement to that effect by its current president, Ireland, on behalf of its 15 member States, namely the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

The president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, Mr. J. Ruperes, has also condemned this unlawful act on behalf of his organization.

The Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, the Russian Federation and Finland, have expressed opposition to the holding of illegal "elections" on behalf of the member countries of the Group, namely the United States, the Russian Federation, Germany, Turkey, France, Italy, Sweden and Belarus, and on behalf of Switzerland as the country currently occupying the presidency of the OSCE.

The international community, consisting of prominent States and authoritative international organizations, has recognized clearly and unequivocally the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Azerbaijani Republic and the inadmissibility of the use of force to alter its internationally recognized borders. The statements by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the aforementioned countries and by international organizations emphasize that the holding of illegal "elections" in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan will adversely affect the already difficult negotiating process and complicate the situation in the region on the eve of the OSCE Lisbon summit.

The illegal "elections" held on 24 November provoked particularly sharp condemnation from the 50,000 Azerbaijanis who were forcibly uprooted by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia from their age-old places of residence in the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic.

It is quite obvious that the so-called "elections" of 24 November, like the other unlawful actions, have not bestowed legitimacy upon the puppet entity and cannot shake the view held by the international community concerning its illegality, or concerning the illegality of the so-called "elections" conducted there.

On the basis of the foregoing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijani Republic considers that the illegal "elections" of 24 November 1996, instigated by the Republic of Armenia in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, occupied as it is by the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, do not have and cannot have any juridical force or legal consequences.

This unlawful act constitutes an attempt to exacerbate the situation in the region and to complicate the negotiations for a settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

The Azerbaijani Republic, in considering the unlawful "elections" to be an act in defiance of the world community and of international public opinion, and a threat to the international legal order, is firmly resolved to uphold its territorial integrity and the inviolability of its citizens and to restore sovereignty over its entire territory.